

## Change the Review Board

'Tis the property tax season again when governmental officials are scurrying about, assessing buildings and machines so that the municipalities have a basis to collect taxes next summer and winter to keep the services going.

Last year at this time we tried to inform the citizenry on what to do if the assessment on their property was in their minds too high, or for that matter too low.

We tried to outline the procedure of appearing before the board of review in their municipality. This group meets once a year, usually in March, and has the power to correct any inequities in the assessment of property.

IN THE LAST COUPLE of weeks home property owners in Birmingham have raised a valid criticism of the makeup of the board of review.

The point had enough merit so that the Birmingham City Commission has decided to put the question on the spring ballot.

Basically, the point is this: Every municipality has an assessing officer. In Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills he is called the "assessor," although in Bloomfield Hills the city manager doubles in that capacity.

In both Bloomfield and Southfield townships, the supervisor by law is the assessor; but Bloomfield does have a full-time staff member who does the assessing.

IF AFTER THE assessor has set a value on property the owner does not agree with the figure, he can ask the board of review to look it over.

The problem raised by the property owners is that the assessor usually sits as one of the three members of the board of review.

They claim that this is like appealing a case of error to a higher court composed partly of the judge who allegedly made the error.

Therefore, the change in the charter provision they are suggesting is that the assessor not be a voting member of the board of review. They feel if he acted as clerk for the board he could still keep the board up to date, but wouldn't be passing on his own work.

## Accentuate—the Local

With the announcement of plans for a major performing arts center at Oakland University comes a realization of the growth of the Rochester area as another hub of cultural activity.

In the beginning, this new program will consist of 12 summer outdoor concerts, to be known as the Meadow Brook Music Festival and to be presented by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Later, it will be broadened to include schools and workshops for music, dance and theater.

WE WELCOME this new arts center and hope to see it achieve success and progress beyond the initial goals. This is, in short, a most laudable kind of cultural program.

Yet, as we recognize and praise it, we must also point out that competition is developing between the Oakland-Rochester and Birmingham-Bloomfield areas as the core of cultural activity in the suburban area.

And this is fine so long as we continue to maintain and cultivate our own resources.

IT PLEASES us that this new arts cen-

TROY IS ALREADY trying this and it makes sense.

We are not advocating this because of any displeasure with any assessing officer. We merely think that the equities lie in favor of a man not reviewing his own work.

However, this new method does raise problems. If the board of review were completely made up of disinterested homeowners, some safeguard should be put in so that the governing body appointing the board of review should select members who have some professional competency in appraisal work.

When you remove the assessing officer from the board, you sometimes take off the only person who knows what a certain type of building is worth or what a tiled bathroom does to the over-all value of a home.

THE PROPERTY OWNERS proposing the change would also like to see a limitation on the period of time a person may serve on the board of review.

We don't particularly subscribe to the merit of this proposition, because if a member is qualified, years of service make him more qualified.

If the member is unqualified, limitation of service might keep him on the board the maximum period allowed.

Another change the property owners' group would like to see is for the board of review to meet at least one Saturday.

At the present time in Birmingham they meet for two days in the middle of the week which makes it difficult for homeowners who work out of town to get in to see them.

Bloomfield Hills schedules all of its board of review sessions on Saturday, and at least one in Birmingham wouldn't be a bad idea.

While it is too late to accomplish this in time for this year's board of review, it might be well for Bloomfield Hills to look into the matter now for later years.

The townships are limited by statute but if there is merit the statutes can be changed.

We feel as far as the proposed charter amendment in Birmingham is concerned that it has merit, that it is fairer than the present arrangement and that it should be adopted by the voters in April.

## Accentuate—the Local

ter is being brought about with the involvement of local residents. We commend Florence and Semon Knudsen of Bingham Farms and the families of Mr. Knudsen's three sisters for their continuing participation in development of local cultural and community projects.

Indeed, we believe our entire community can be proud of the Knudsen's. That Mr. Knudsen is one of the busiest executives in the automotive industry goes without question. That he still finds it possible to give time and support to local cultural needs speaks even more highly of him.

AS OUR readers must know, this newspaper has consistently urged participation in programs and projects of local worthiness. It affords us great pleasure to call attention to this most recent example.

While giving due credit to the performing arts center at Oakland University, we renew our plea that continued support and expression in the arts also be made in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area. Let us be reminded at all times of the importance of providing a setting of inspiration and beauty for our children to enjoy right here "at home, in our own backyard."

## From The Eccentric's Point of View...

France recognizes the Peking regime and calls this "normalizing" relations with the government of Communist China. Most of us would be better pleased if Peking would take steps to "normalize" itself as a responsible member of the world community.

Eisenhower's memoirs tell of a visitor who went at what it meant to him, once a Midwestern farm boy to be in the White House. He knew just how he felt.

An actress says Cleopatra was really remark-

## PEOPLE'S COLUMN

### Youth Problem Does Exist; But It's Not Hopeless One

To the Editor:

What has happened to the youth of today? Every time we pick up a newspaper or turn on the radio or television we read or hear about more youth violence.

We here in Birmingham had the problem placed right in our laps with the recent stabbing of a 14-year-old girl on a Birmingham street.

Is the younger generation, particularly in Birmingham, something to be ashamed of? Certainly not.

There are definite problem children in Birmingham as in other communities. No community, even one with the high caliber of citizens as Birmingham, is immune from problem children.

AS A MEMBER of the Birmingham Youth Assistance Committee, I see many of these youth problems first hand. Many parents see nothing wrong in allowing their 15 and 17-year-old son or daughter throw a party and serve beer. The parents feel it is permissible if it is in their own homes.

Many other parents coddle their child caught shoplifting in Birmingham. Our committee hopes to help decrease the shoplifting problem by a coopera-

tive effort of the merchants, parents and the Birmingham Police Dept.

THE SCHOOLS are suffering from far too many discipline problems. A teacher finds it very difficult to teach discipline when the student is allowed to do as he or she pleases as soon as he or she leaves the school campus. Far too many children are allowed to wander the streets aimlessly while the parents do not know or care where the children are.

Many youths lack respect for adults. Many others have no concept of what it means to work and accept responsibility.

The Youth Bureau of the Birmingham Police Dept. confirms that young arrests this year are running far ahead of last year in Birmingham. These boys and girls come from both poor and wealthy homes alike.

YES, THESE problems do exist, even in Birmingham. But this does not mean we should throw our hands up in disgust and let all of our youth go. We all our parents as some would have us do.

The Birmingham Youth Assistance Committee is seeking to prevent delinquency. The committee seeks to help marginal

children before they get into such serious trouble that they must be sent to Juvenile Court.

We in Birmingham are far more fortunate than most communities. We have a fine YMCA, a fine recreational program, the finest schools and churches and most important we have many fine parents.

Rather than condemn the small minority of problem families in Birmingham, we should use all our combined talents to help these children.

AS A MEMBER of the Birmingham Youth Assistance Committee, I would welcome suggestions from anyone as to how these problem children and parents can be helped.

Everyone within the community. Through a combined community effort of education for the marginal child and parent alike, we can lick our problems and the police can report next year that the youth crime within Birmingham is on the downsloping.

Either as a parent or a citizen we must do our part. Let's start now.

EUGENE A. MOORE  
Secretary, Birmingham Youth Assistance Committee  
2327 Townsend St.  
Birmingham

## PEOPLE'S COLUMN

### Another Way to Say: 'To Each His Own'

To the Editor:

A letter in the Peoples' Column in a recent issue of The Eccentric stated that those who are unwilling to engage in a civil rights demonstration are "morally sloppy and irresponsible."

I've been working in this outstanding community for 33 years. I know I have many weaknesses. I am searching my conscience again to see if the compartment labeled: "Morally sloppy and irresponsible" is also filled. I really didn't think it was.

A vague notion creeps into my mind that the above judgment is something that has become quite cliché in recent days. "If you don't agree with me, you are either a Communist or you are 'morally sloppy and irresponsible.'"

THERE ARE many who did not participate in the demonstration on Sunday, Feb. 9. This is not because we are opposed to the rights of minority groups. We are completely sympathetic with any movement that has as its goal opportunities for all citizens of these United States.

We do not want to see the exploitation of any group of American citizens because of race, color or religious creed.

But we do not believe that public demonstrations are an effective method of bringing about these goals. Climbing on a band wagon doesn't appeal to us. Neither does

standing on a curb and waving a flag. "Pro Patria" is not much of a motivation for patriotism.

WE BELIEVE that the solution of the problem of prejudice lies in the process of education; and we mean religious education—not just talking about brotherhood. The truth is, we can't have brotherhood unless we thoroughly understand the basic concepts of Christianity.

We have to understand: 1) That every human being is spiritually defective. 2) That Christ came into the world to correct this defect and to give us the power to overcome it. 3) Brotherhood is an expression of our gratitude that we are all redeemed children of God.

THIS IS a long-range program. The church has the responsibility of teaching these foundation truths. It is done as we patiently go about "teaching them to observe all things which the Lord has commanded us." It is not done by sit-ins, sit-downs or other public demonstrations.

The above constitutes my own honest conviction. Others believe just as sincerely in demonstrations. This is each man's privilege in our country.

REV. THEO. WUGGAZER  
Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

### Find School Board Power 'Astounding'

To the Editor:

On Jan. 28, we attended our first Birmingham school board meeting and were astounded at the power this board thinks it has over our children's lives outside of school. It is frightening to see that this is the governing body of the school district that controls the policy and standards under which our children are subjected.

THE OBJECTIVES, purposes and necessities of a school board are well known; however, their dictating to the parents and children is terrifying.

Their presumptuous attitude with which they accept the right to declare any organization that involves public school students outside of school as legal or illegal is a sign of social control, not of a free democracy.

TAE Association Inc., and any other organizations which may someday fall under the scrutiny of the school board, should not let its worthwhile activities be destroyed by such a group.

ALL COMMUNITIES need organizations run and supervised by groups, so rather than lash out at TAE, the school board should welcome these organizations that are

beneficial to the teen-agers, as well as to the community.

We are living in a dangerous society if we allow the school board to dictate to us and our children. Let us take action and not sit back complacently and let our rights be taken away from us.

MR. AND MRS. RICHARD P. MABES  
25800 York  
Huntington Woods

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Birmingham Board of Education is acting under a state law that prohibits membership in secret societies by high school students.

### Mr. Koester: Take Another Look, Please

To the Editor:

I see Mr. Koester has again (Jan. 30 Eccentric) taken his bank in hand. His statement of fact is cast suspicion over the motives of such public-spirited citizen groups as school boards and teachers' study

30 YEARS AGO  
Feb. 22, 1934

City Commissioner Arthur J. Kane told The Eccentric Wednesday night that he intends to be a candidate for re-election at the polls April 2, but Commissioner Lawrence Hulbert is undecided whether he will enter the race. With the deadline for filing petitions set for March 10, only slightly more than three weeks ago, Kane is the only candidate with his hat definitely in the ring, and even prospective candidates appear to be unusually scarce.

Tom Ellery, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold T. Ellery of Adams road, besides being captain of the University of Michigan track team and a capable public speaker, as demonstrated by his talk at the Father and Son service at the Methodist Church Sunday afternoon, is a good student as well. He was one of 33 members of Michigan's athletic squads, exclusive of freshmen, who started grades averaging "B" or better.

Information regarding the cost of the reorganization of the First National Bank and the progress of liquidation will be revealed in form reports to be posted in the bank at the end of each week, according to P. J. Hall, assistant supervising receiver of the division of insolvent national banks of the U. S. Treasury Department. (See HAPPENINGS, 5-B)

## Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

### MORE BITS AND PIECES

In their deliberations on the tax-cut bill, one of the amendments Congress turned down was a deduction for parents who send their children to nonpublic schools.

The thought has some merit, since parents who send their children to public schools get to deduct on their income tax return the cost when they are allowed to deduct the school taxes they pay.

Parents of nonpublic schoolers have to pay both the local school taxes as well as tuition to the private school.

The justification for the deduction would be that if these nonpublic schoolers were sent to public schools the cost of their education would have to be added to our property taxes.

If some relief is not granted to nonpublic school parents and costs of tuition go up each year, pretty soon there will be fewer and fewer private schools and more and more dollars needed in taxes to educate the new public schoolers.

EDWARD A. MEANY, JR.

The name may not be familiar to most of us, but he is a candidate for the Republican nomination to face Phil Hart for the U.S. Senate this fall.

He is an interesting chap who quit his job last summer to devote full time to campaigning for the office.

He has never held an elective public office other than as precinct delegate to his local county party convention.

He was a feather goods salesman before getting his

His philosophy is couched in such slogans as, "Federal aid to education is dangerous and intolerable, but a free public education is indispensable." Which means?

HIS OUTSTANDING characteristic is that he is the father of nine girls.

He did save his money so that his spouse and the girls could live for a year and a half while he tours the countryside searching for votes.

It is a determined man, but I asked him why he didn't start in politics by seeking a lesser office and gaining some experience before he took on one of the best voters in the Democratic Party.

His answer was that he couldn't afford to. My feeling is that I couldn't afford to vote for a man that couldn't afford getting experience.

## City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

It isn't the kids. It's the adults. The problems confronting our young people today are more directly the fault of adults than of the youngsters.

Some of this blame goes to the parents; but other adults are responsible, too.

I'm more convinced of this than ever after reading a letter to the editor in the Feb. 13 issue of the High School student paper, The Highlander.

The author is Merle Smith, a Seaholm counselor. Obviously, he knows little about newspapering. Yet, he saw fit to criticize this newspaper (indirectly) and others for their handling of the teen stabbing case.

No wonder the kids are confused when people who represent authority speak out so strongly on something they know little about. How are the kids to learn?

"MOST OF the major newspapers in this area have been guilty of irresponsible journalism in their attempt to give the public complete coverage of the recent murder of a Birmingham girl," Smith said at the outset.

"I have always felt that newspapers should not publish the name of a suspect of any crime, especially the name of a juvenile. Irreparable damage could be done to the reputation of a citizen merely because he is a suspect."

Apparently, because we newspapers did publish the name of the stabber in the teen stabbing case, in spite of Smith's opinion to the contrary we are guilty of irresponsible journalism.

SOME NEWS is sensational. There is no escaping that, whether it's reported by the grapevine, radio, television or newspaper.

If Smith really knew anything about journalism, he would recognize that The Eccentric stayed with the facts and did not sensationalize this story.

It is our policy at The Eccentric to report all news of our community as accurately, as completely and as objectively as possible. We refuse to ignore a story because it might be controversial or sensational in itself. But neither do we seek to sensationalize a story.

It makes good sense to print the facts rather than listen to unfounded rumors that circulate in cases like this.

SMITH WENT on to say that he was "angered at the publishing of the name and picture of a 15-year-old boy who has been labeled indirectly 'guilty' until proven innocent as a result of newspaper sensationalism written by over-zealous reporters."

"This very day I was approached by just such a reporter from a Birmingham newspaper who asked me what I knew about the boy. I replied that I knew nothing that I wanted published and then excused myself. He was not discouraged and continued his search for news among students and teachers as any 'good' reporter would do."

THE BIRMINGHAM Eccentric is the only newspaper in Birmingham. So, Smith could only be referring to one of our reporters.

Good. If that reporter had let one refusal to comment discourage him, he would not be on our news staff today.

And I venture to say that Smith would not be a counselor at Seaholm, or any other school, today if he refused to proceed with an assignment after receiving an initial negative response.

FURTHERMORE, if the people in responsible positions, such as Smith as a counselor and the school administrators, had answered the reporters' questions, the need to question children would not have arisen.

(See CITY BEAT, 4-B)

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